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THE REFORMATION JUSTIFY'D:

IN A

SERMON

Preached at

GUILD-HALL CHAPPEL

Septemb. 21. 1673.

Before the

Lord Major

AND

ALDERMEN, &c.

By EDW. STILLINGFLEET, D. D. Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

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Acts XXIV. 14.

But this I confeſs unto thee, that after the way which they call hereſie, ſo worſhip I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets.

IN the beginning of this Chapter we find St. *Paul* brought to his Tryal before *Felix* the *Roman Governour*, wherein (if we only except the unfitneſs of the Judge) all other things concurred, which could make ſuch an action conſiderable, *viz.* the greatneſs of the *cauſe*, the quality of the *perſons*, and the *skill* which was ſhewed in the management of it. The cauſe was not common and ordinary, ſuch as were wont to be tryed before the *Governours* of *Provinces*, but of an unuſual and publick nature; not *a queſtion of words and names*, as *Gallio* Act. 18. 15. thought it, but of a matter of the higheſt im-

portance to the world: which being managed by St. *Paul*, with that zeal and induſtry, which was agreeable to it, gave occaſion to his malicious Countreymen to accuſe him before the *Roman* Governour, as one guilty of Faction and Sedition. Under this colour, they hoped eaſily to gain the *Governours* good will to their deſign; being a perſon that more regarded the quiet of his *Province*, than all the concernments of Truth and Religion. But that this deſign might be carried on with the greater pomp and ſhew of Juſtice and Piety, they do not commit the care of it to the rage of the people, or ſome furious Zealots; but
Ver. 1. the *High Prieſt* and ſome members of the *Sanhedrin* go down on purpoſe from *Hieruſalem* to *Cæſarea*, and carry with them one of their moſt eloquent *Advocates* called *Tertullus* to manage the accuſation againſt *Paul*. Who was no ſooner called forth, but the Orator begins to ſhew his art, by a flattering inſinuation, which is moſt apt to prevail with men of mean and
Ver. 2, 3. corrupt minds; *Seeing that by thee*, ſaith he, *we enjoy great quietneſs, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this Nation by thy providence; we accept it alwaies and in all places, moſt noble* Felix, *with all thankfulneſs*: Having thus prepared his Judge, he preſently falls upon the matter, and charges
Ver. 5, 6. St. *Paul* with being a peſtilent and ſeditious perſon,

perſon, a diſturber of his Nation in all parts, a prophaner of the Temple; but the main point of all, and in which the reſt were comprehended, was, that *he was a ringleader of the Sect of the Nazarenes.* (So the Chriſtians were then called among the Jews, from our Saviours abode in the Town of *Nazareth.*) But although the Writer of this Hiſtory gives us only the ſhort heads of his accuſation; yet we may eaſily ſuppoſe by St. *Paul's* anſwer, that he inſiſted more largely on this, than on any of the reſt: repreſenting to *Felix*, "That "when the Jewiſh Church had been at firſt "eſtabliſhed by God himſelf under Laws of "his own making, when he had ſo ſettled the "ſeveral orders and degrees of men among "them, that *the Prieſts lips were to preſerve know-* Mal. 2. 7.
"*ledge, and the Law to be ſought at their mouths*; "when under this Government, their Religi-"on had been preſerved for many hundreds "of years, and after many revolutions they "enjoyed one common and publik Worſhip "among them, though there were ſeveral di-"ſtinct Orders of Religious men (ſuch as "the *Phariſees* and *Eſſens*) yet all agreed in the "ſame Divine Worſhip; but now at laſt to "their great regret and horror appears one "*Jeſus* of *Nazareth*, a perſon of obſcure pa-"rentage and mean education, who pretend-

ed

" ed to discover many corruptions in the do-
" ctrine and practices of our best men; and
" without any Authority from the High Priest
" or *Sanhedrin* he gathered Disciples, and drew
" multitudes of people after him; till at last
" the wisdom of our Governours thought it
" fit to take him off, and make him an exam-
" ple for *Reformers*; notwithstanding this, his
" bold and forward Disciples after his death
" carried on the same design, pretending that
Heb. 9. 10. " *the time of Reformation was come*; and accor-
" dingly have formed themselves into a Sect,
" vigorous and active, of high pretences, and
" dangerous designs, which if it continues and
" increases can end in nothing short of the
" ruine of our *antient Jewish Catholick Church*;
" which hath had so constant and visible a
" Succession in all Ages; that hath had so ma-
" ny Martyrs and Confessors in it; so many
" Devout and Religious Persons as the *Phari-*
" *sees* are; so excellent an Order and Govern-
" ment, so much unity and peace before this
" new Sect of *Nazarenes* arose in opposition to
" that Authority with which God had invest-
" ed the High Priest and Rulers of the People.
" And among all the promoters of this *new*
" *Sect*, there is none more factious and busie
" than this *Paul* whom *we* here accuse; and
" *whom some of our Nation found in the Temple pro-*

phaning

"*faning of it*, and there we would preſently out of "meer zeal to our Religion have taken and de- "ſtroyed; but he was violently reſcued out of "our hands, and ſent hither to be tried; and "theſe things, which I have ſpoken, is the ſenſe "of all thoſe who are come down as witneſſes; for ſo we read, *v.* 9. *And the Jews alſo aſſented and ſaid, that theſe things were ſo.* St. *Paul* being thus accuſed, and having leave given him to anſwer for himſelf, was ſo far from being daunted by the greatneſs of his enemies, or the vehemency of Ver. 10. their accuſation, that he tells the Governour, that he did *with all cheerfulneſs* undertake his defence: and there being two parts of his accuſation, 1. His tumultuous and profane carriage in the Temple; this he utterly denies, *v.* 11, 12, 13. and plainly tells them, they can never prove it againſt him. 2. But as to the other and main part of the Charge, his being a *ringleader of the Sect of the Nazarenes*; although he would not, out of his great modeſty, take upon himſelf to be one of the Heads or Chiefs among them, yet as to the owning of that way, notwithſtanding all the imputations they had caſt upon it, he doth it with the greateſt freedom and courage in the preſence of his Judge and Accuſers; and not only ſo, but defends himſelf therein, that he had done nothing contrary to the Laws of God, or the moſt antient Religion of his Countrey: all which particulars

are contained in the words of the Text; *But this I confeſs unto thee, that after the way which they call hereſie, ſo worſhip I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets.*

Wherein we have theſe three things conſiderable.

1. The Imputation which Chriſtianity ſuffered under in its firſt appearance: *After the way, which they call hereſie.*

2. The Way taken by St. *Paul* to remove this falſe Imputation; *viz.* by appeal to Scripture and Antiquity; *So worſhip I the God of my Fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law and the Prophets.*

3. The Courage of St. *Paul* in ſo freely owning his Religion in the preſence of his greateſt enemies, and when they were in hopes to deſtroy him for it: *This I confeſs unto thee, that after the way*, &c.

1. I begin with the falſe Imputation which Chriſtianity ſuffered under at its firſt appearance; *After the way which is called hereſie*; the ſame Word which is tranſlated *Sect*, *v.* 5. and although the Word be indifferent in it ſelf, yet where it is taken for a combination of men together againſt an eſtabliſhed Religion and lawful Authority (as it was by the Jews when they charged the Chriſtians under this name) then it implies in it a twofold accuſation: 1. Of Novelty and

Sin-

Singularity. 2. Of Faction and Sedition.

1. Of Novelty. A Sect or Hereſie in this ſenſe implies in it, mens ſetting up with a new Doctrine which was not heard of before; and making that the Foundation of a new Society ſeparate and diſtinct from the eſtabliſhed Church, and conſequently they muſt charge the Church they are divided from with errors and corruptions, or they make themſelves guilty of Schiſm, *i. e.* unneceſſary ſeparation. Now upon theſe two grounds the Jews laid the imputation of a *New Sect* upon the *Nazarenes* or *Chriſtians*, 1. Becauſe they could not ſhew a viſible ſucceſſion in all Ages: 2. Becauſe they could not prove the Jewiſh Church to be guilty of ſuch errors and corruptions as to need a Reformation.

1. They could not ſhew a Succeſſion in all Ages of ſuch perſons who agreed in all things with them. "For where (ſay they) were the "men to be found in former Ages, that taxed the "Jewiſh Church with ſuch errors and corrupti-"ons as *Jeſus* of *Nazareth* did; that bid men *be-"ware of the leaven of the Scribes and Phariſees*, i. e. "of the moſt learned and holy men. Had not "God alwaies a Viſible Church among them? "they could produce the names of their High "Prieſts in every Age, and ſhew them all the "marks of a Viſible Church: For *in* Judah *was* Pſal. 76. 1. "*God known, and his Name was great in* Iſrael. *Hath* Deut. 12. 11. "*not*

2 Kings 21. 7. 2 Chron. 7. 16. "not God ſaid, that in his Houſe at Hieruſalem he "would put his Name for ever; and his eyes and his "heart ſhould be there perpetually? How is it then "poſſible but there muſt be a conſtant and viſi- "ble Succeſſion in all Ages? ſince God would "alwaies have a people to dwell among; and "that might be known to be his people by the "outward marks and ſigns of a true Church. "But if the Chriſtians pretences held good, God "muſt for ſeveral Ages have wanted a Church "amongſt them. For none of thoſe things which "they charged the Jews with, were newly crept "in among them, but had been delivered down "to them by the Tradition of their Fore-fathers, "in an uninterrupted manner, as they thought, "from the very time of *Moſes*. This was their "Rule whereby they guided themſelves in their "actions of Religion, and in the ſenſe of obſcure "places of the Law and the Prophets; and in "that time after the ceſſation of Prophecy, when "the Chriſtians ſuppoſed theſe corruptions to "have come in among them, they could draw "down a conſtant Succeſſion from *the men of the* "*great Synagogue*, of perſons eminent for Learn- "ing and Piety that never charged them with "any ſuch corruptions as *Jeſus* of *Nazareth* and "his Diſciples did. Would God ever ſuffer ſuch "dangerous errors, hypocriſie, and ſuperſtitions "to prevail in his own Church, and raiſe up no

"Perſons

"Perſons to diſcover theſe things, till theſe new "Teachers and Reformers aroſe? Were not *Hil-* "*lel* and *Shammai* that ſo accurately diſcuſſed all "the niceties of the Law, able to find out ſuch "groſs and open corruptions, if any ſuch had "been among us? Might not we ſay, *that not only* "*the Teachers, but God himſelf had ſlept all that time*, if "he raiſed up no one Perſon to diſcover the com- "ing in of ſuch errors and corruptions? Where "had God then any true Church in the world, "if not among his people of the Jews? And "would he ſuffer that to be overſpread with ſuch "a Leproſie, and ſend none of his Prieſts to diſ- "cover it? And even by the confeſſion of the "Chriſtians themſelves, they were once the be- "loved and choſen people of God, how or when "was it that they ceaſed to be ſo? Do not them- "ſelves acknowledge, that they receive the Law "and the Prophets from our hands? And that *to* "*us were committed the Oracles of God, and that to us* Rom. 3. 2. "*pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the Covenants,* "*and the giving of the Law, and the Jervice of God and* 9. 4, 5. "*the promiſes, and that ours are the Fathers*? How is it "then poſſible after all theſe priviledges, to ſup- "poſe this Church to fall into ſuch a degeneracy, "as at laſt to be caſt off by God, and a new Church "to ariſe out of the aſhes of it? Thus we may reaſonably ſuppoſe the Jews to have argued for themſelves; and on the other ſide, they trampled

V. Bell. de not. Eccleſ. l. 4. c. 5. §. præterea.

upon and deſpiſed this new Sect of the *Nazarenes*,
" That had nothing of the Pomp and Splendour
" of their Church: they had only a company of
" mean and illiterate perſons at firſt to joyn with
" them; the Diſciples of their Maſter were a ſort
" of poor Fiſhermen and inconſiderable perſons,
" men of no Authority, or reputation for extra-
" ordinary Sanctity or Learning: even their
" Maſter himſelf was one of no great ſeverity of
" life, that did not retire from the world, and lead
" an abſtracted life, but converſed with Publicans
" and Sinners, and put not his Diſciples upon
" Faſting and long Prayers; whereas the Phari-
" ſees were men of great auſterity and mortifica-
" tion, much exerciſed in devotion, making fre-
" quent and long prayers, at certain hours; and
" in whatever place thoſe hours took them. Now
" how is it poſſible to believe, that ſuch devout
" perſons as theſe are miſtaken, and the Sect of
" the *Nazarenes* only in the right? But beſides all
" this, Where was their Church before *Jeſus* of
" *Nazareth*? We offer to produce a perſonal ſuc-
" ceſſion on our ſide, that joyned in conſtant com-
" munion with us at the Temple at *Hieruſalem*;
" let the Chriſtians ſhew any number of men
" before themſelves, that joyned with them in be-
" lieving what they do, and rejecting the abuſes
" which they tax among us: if they cannot do
" this, let them then ſuffer under the juſt imputa-
" tion of Novelty.

2. " But

2. "But ſuppoſing they do not think it neceſ-
"ſary to aſſign a number of men diſtinct from
"our Society, but ſay *it is enough that though they*
"*joyned with them in the worſhip of God, yet they did not*
"*in their corruptions*: yet to vindicate themſelves,
"they muſt ſhew how it was poſſible for ſuch
"corruptions to come in, and no more notice be
"taken of them: Such things could not be intro-
"duced without ſome notable alteration; and
"in ſuch a one, the author, the time, the place, the
"manner may be aſſigned: We can tell, ſay they,
"all theſe circumſtances in the Idolatries of *Jero-*
"*boam*, *Ahab*, and *Manaſſeh*: if ſo great alterations
"have hapned in the ſtate of our Church, that
"there is a neceſſity of reforming it; name us
"the perſons, the time, the place, the manner how
"all theſe corruptions came in. When came men
"firſt to forſake the letter of the *Scripture*, and ad-
"here to *Tradition*? Who firſt brought in the *Pha-*
"*riſaical* Superſtitions? What was his name, where
"was his abode, who firſt oppoſed and condem-
"ned him? Were all men aſleep then to ſuffer
"ſuch alterations, and to ſay nothing at all
"againſt them? What, could one Generation
"conſpire to deceive the next? and if not, how
"could ſuch changes happen in matters of Reli-
"gion, and no one take care to diſcover it and
"prevent the infecting of poſterity by it? Had no
"perſons any regard to God and the purity of

"Religion

" Religion then ? If they had, would they ſuffer
" ſtrange fire to come upon Gods Altar, and take
" no notice at all of it ? Why did not *Jeſus* of *Na-*
" *zareth*, when he ſo frequently and vehemently
" declaimed againſt the *Phariſaical* hypocriſie and
" ſuperſtitions, and falſe Doctrines, ſhew to the
" people, when, and where, and how theſe things
" came into the Church of God ? He only con-
" demns them, and ſpeaks ſharply againſt them,
" but he ſaith not one word to ſatisfie the *Scienti-*
" *fical* men among them, how it was poſſible for
" corruptions to come in, and prevail to ſuch a
" degree, and yet no circumſtances of time or
" place be aſſignable of it. Thus the Jews ſtill believed themſelves to be the only *true*, *antient*, *viſible Catholick* and *infallible Church* of *God*, and deſpiſed the poor *Chriſtians*, as a novel and upſtart *Sect* of *Nazarenes*; which is the firſt imputation the Chriſtians ſuffered under.

2. They ſuffered under the imputation of *Faction* and *Sedition*; which is the ſecond thing implied in the name of *Sect* or *Hereſie* here mentioned; and that they charged upon them two waies. 1. For not ſubmitting to the Churches Authority. 2. For diſturbing the peace and quiet of the People.

1. For *not ſubmitting to the Churches Authority*: not, that the Diſciples of our Lord did out of humour, or fancy, or only to make a party, break with the Jews in matters meerly of order and indifferency:

differency: no, on the contrary we find them extreamly cautious of giving any offence in ſuch matters, which temper they learnt of their *Lord* and *Maſter*, who complied with many things, that others might not take advantage by his omiſſion of them, to ſlight and contemn them; thus when others were Baptized of *John*, he would be ſo too; not, that he had any need of waſhing away of ſin: but he would not make uſe of a particular priviledge to bring any diſcountenance upon a general duty. Thus we ſee, he went up at the ſolemn *Feaſts* to *Hieruſalem* as others did; and not only was preſent in the *Temple*, but vindicated by a Miracle the order and decency of it, by *driving out the buyers and ſellers* from the outward parts of it, although they had a fair pretence of being ready at hand to ſerve the neceſſities of ſuch as were to ſacrifice to God in the Temple; nay St. *Mark* tells us, *that he would not ſuffer any veſſel to be carried through the Temple*: and this he did not upon any reaſon peculiar to the *Levitical Law*, but becauſe it was *a Houſe of Prayer*. And this example his Apoſtles followed, who after they had the *Holy Ghoſt* poured upon them, yet they attended the Temple at the hours of prayer. But moſt remarkable to this purpoſe, is the inſtance of St. *Paul* at that very time when he was ſeized upon, and like to be deſtroyed by the fury of the Jews. For, underſtanding at *Hieruſalem* from

Mat. 3. 15.

Mat. 21. 12.

Mar. 11. 16.

Act. 3. 1.

Acts 21. 20, 21. St. *James, that there were many thousands of believing Jews that were still zealous of the Law*, and were informed that St. *Paul* among the Gentiles slighted *circumcision and the Levitical Customs*; he to give them all reasonable satisfaction that he intended to make no unnecessary breach among them about indifferent matters, submits himself to a legal purification in the Temple for seven daies together; before the end of which, the Jews made a tumult and seized upon him, and so he was brought to answer the accusations against him in this Chapter. Thus careful St. *Paul* was to give no ground for suspicion that he delighted in disorders and separations; this example he did leave to all prudent Christians, rather to submit to things which they have no great value for (as no doubt at this time St. *Paul* had very little for the *Levitical Customs*) than to hazard the breaking the peace of the Church for such matters. But notwithstanding all this care of the first Christians, they could not avoid the imputation of *Faction*; because they would not entirely submit their judgements to the Authority of the Jewish Church. For this was the great pretence they stood upon, that they were the *Governours* of the Church by *Gods own institution*, that they were to explain and interpret *the Law and the Prophets*; and this was expressed in the beginning of their Law, *That in all cases of difficulty they were to go up to the*

Ver. 7.

place

place which the Lord their God ſhould chuſe; and to go to the Prieſts, and the Levites, and to the Judge, and they ſhall ſhew thee the ſentence of judgement. And thou ſhalt do according to the ſentence which they of that place (which the Lord ſhall chuſe) ſhall ſhew thee, and thou ſhalt obſerve to do according to all that they inform thee; and the man that will do preſumptuouſly, and will not hearken to the Prieſt, (that ſtandeth to miniſter there before the Lord thy God) or unto the Judge, even that man ſhall die, and thou ſhalt put away the evil from Iſrael. Upon this place, they might certainly much better eſtabliſh the Infallibility of their own Church, than others draw an argument for Infallibility in the Chriſtian Church from it. However, abſolute obedience would ſerve their turn, to charge the Chriſtians with *Faction*, in not ſubmitting to their Authority. "For, was not this a matter of diffi- "culty, whether the Meſſias were to be a tem- "poral Prince or not? concerning what time, "and place, and perſon the Prophecies were to "be underſtood? Who were the competent "Judges in this caſe, but thoſe whom God had "eſtabliſhed by his Law? If the Scribes and Pha- "riſees were charged with falſe gloſſes, and cor- "rupting the Law by their Traditions, the Chri- "ſtians were not to take upon themſelves to "judge of them; but to appeal to the High "Prieſt and the *Sanhedrin*, who were the only law- "ful Judges in theſe matters: Their duty was Deut. 17.8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

" ſubmiſſion and patience; but by no means
" ought they upon their own Authority to be-
" gin a new Church, and to broach new Do-
" ctrines directly contrary to the judgement of
" the High Prieſt and *Sanhedrin*; yea, after they
" had pronounced Sentence againſt *Jeſus* of *Na-*
" *zareth*, and condemned him to death; and ex-
" communicated his followers, and puniſhed as
" many as they could get into their power;
" what could it (in their opinion) be but the
" Spirit of Faction and diſobedience thus to op-
" poſe the Authority of their Church, in believ-
" ing contrary to its decrees, and reforming
" without any power derived from it? We ſee in
our Saviours time how ſeverely they checked any of the people who ſpake favourably of Chriſt and his Doctrine; As though the poor ignorant people were fit to judge of theſe matters! to underſtand Prophecies, and to know the true Meſſias, when he ſhould appear! And therefore when ſome of their Officers that had been ſent to apprehend him, came back with admiration of him, and ſaid, *Never man ſpake like this man*, they take them up ſhort and tell them, *They muſt believe as the Church believes*; what, they take upon them to judge of ſuch matters! No, they muſt ſubmit to their Governours: *Have any of the Rulers, or Phariſees believed on him? but this people which know not the Law are curſed.* i. e. When they ſet up

Joh. 7. 46, 47, 48, 49.

their

their own judgement in opposition to the Authority of the Church. And after our Saviours death at a solemn Council at *Hierusalem*, when *Peter* and *John* were summoned before them; the first Question they asked was, *By what power, or by what name have ye done this?* They never enquired, whether the Miracle were wrought or no, or whether their Doctrine were true; all their Question was about their Mission, whether it were ordinary or extraordinary; or what authority they could pretend to, that were not sent by themselves; but let the things be never so true, which they said, if they could find any flaw in their Mission according to their own Rules and Laws, this they thought sufficient ground to forbid them to Preach any more, and to charge them with Faction if they disobeyed. Acts 4. 7.

2. They charged the Christians with *Faction* in being *so active and busie* to promote Christianity to the great disturbance of the Jews in all parts. This *Tertullus* accused St. *Paul* of, *that he was a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world*; and accordingly the *Jews* at *Thessalonica* take the Christians by force and carry them to the *Rulers* of the City, crying, *Those that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.* This they knew was the most effectual course to render them odious to all Governours, who are apt to suspect all new things as dangerous, and Ver. 5. Acts 17. 6.

think no truth can compenſate the hazard of alterations. Thus it was eſpecially among the *Roman* Governours, who had learnt from the counſel given to *Auguſtus*, to be particularly jealous of all innovations in Religion; and had much rather the people ſhould continue quiet under an old error, than have the peace diſturbed for the greateſt Truth. This was really the greateſt difficulty in the way of Chriſtianity, it came no where, but people were poſſeſſed before-hand with quite other apprehenſions of Religion, than the Chriſtians brought among them. The Jewiſh and Pagan Religions were in poſſeſſion in all places, and the people were at eaſe in the practice of them. What then muſt the Chriſtians do? Muſt they let them alone and not endeavour to convince them of the truth of their own Doctrine? If ſo, they are unfaithful to their truſt, betrayers of truth, and falſe to the Souls of men: if they go about to perſwade men out of their Religion, they know, ſuch is the fondneſs moſt men have for their own opinions, eſpecially in Religion, that where they might hope to convince *one*, they might be ſure to enrage *many*; eſpecially of thoſe whoſe intereſt lay in upholding the old Religion. How little doth Reaſon ſignifie with moſt men, where Intereſt is againſt it! Truth and falſhood are odd kind of Metaphyſical things to them, which they do not care

to

to trouble their heads with; but what makes for or againſt their Intereſt, is thought eaſie and ſubſtantial. All other matters are as *Gallio* ſaid, *queſtions of names and words*, which they care not for; but no men will ſooner offer to demonſtrate a thing to be falſe, than they who know it to be againſt their intereſt to believe it to be true. This was the caſe of theſe great men of the Jews that came down to accuſe *Paul*; they eaſily ſaw whither this new Religion tended, and if it prevailed among their people, farewel then to all the *Pomp* and *Splendour* of the *High-Prieſthood* at *Hieruſalem*; farewel then to the *Glory* of the *Temple* and *City* whither all the Tribes came up to worſhip thrice a year; farewel then to all the Riches, and Eaſe, and Pleaſure which they enjoyed: And what was the greateſt Truth and beſt Religion in the world to them, in compariſon with theſe? Theſe were ſufficient reaſons to them to accuſe Truth it ſelf of deceiving men, and the moſt peaceable Doctrine of laying the Foundation of Faction and Sedition. Thus we have conſidered the falſe imputations which were caſt upon Chriſtianity at firſt, implyed in theſe words, *After the way which is called hereſie.*

2. I now come to the way taken by St. *Paul* to remove theſe falſe imputations, which he doth,

1. By an appeal to Scripture, as the ground and rule of his faith, *Believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets*

2. By

2. By an appeal to the beſt and pureſt Antiquity, as to the object of Worſhip; *So worſhip I the God of my Fathers*, not bringing in any new Religion, but reſtoring it to its primitive purity.

1. *By an appeal to Scripture as the ground and rule of his Faith.* The *Jews* pleaded *Poſſeſſion*, *Tradition*, *Authority* of the *preſent Church*: againſt all theſe St. *Paul* fixes upon a certain and unmoveable Foundation, *the Law and the Prophets.* He doth not here inſiſt upon any particular revelation made to himſelf, but offers the whole matter in diſpute to be tryed by a common Rule that was allowed on both ſides. And his meaning is, if they could prove that he either aſſerted, or did any thing contrary to *the Law and the Prophets*, then they had ſome reaſon to accuſe him of innovation, or beginning of a *new Sect*; but if the foundation of his doctrine and practice lay in what themſelves acknowledged to be from God, then they had no cauſe to charge him with introducing a *new Sect* among them.

But the great Queſtion here is, "What ground "St. *Paul* had to decline the *Authority of the preſent* "*Church?* Since God himſelf had appointed the "Prieſts to be the interpreters of the Law; and "therefore in doubtful caſes reſort was to be "made to them; and not the judgement left to "particular perſons about the ſenſe of Scri-"pture; and yet in this caſe it is apparent

St. *Paul*

St. *Paul* declined all Authority of the preſent Church; for at that very time the *High-Prieſts and Elders* came down to accuſe him, and he takes not the leaſt notice of their judgement in this matter. I ſhall therefore now ſhew that St. *Paul* had very great reaſon ſo to do, and to appeal only to *Scripture*.

1. Becauſe the Authority of the preſent Church was more lyable to error and miſtake, than the Rule of Scripture was.

2. Becauſe it was lyable to more partiality, than that was.

1. Becauſe it was more lyable to *error and miſtake*, than the Rule of Scripture was. It was agreed on both ſides, that the Law was from God, and that *the Prophets ſpake by the inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt*; all that was now left was only to find out the true meaning of them, and to compare Prophecies with events. As in the caſe of the *Meſsias*, if the circumſtances foretold by the *Prophets* had their exact accompliſhment in Chriſt, as might appear to thoſe who carefully compared them; *If he were born at* Bethlehem, *of the Tribe of* Judah, *when the Scepter was departed from it, and during the ſecond Temple*, and all other circumſtances agreeing; then though the ordinary judgement concerning *true Prophets* belonged to the *Sanhedrin*, yet it was far more reaſonable to believe that they were miſtaken, than that all the Prophecies ſhould be ac-

compliſhed in a perſon that was not the true *Meſſias*. For thoſe Prophecies were not intended only for the *Prieſts* and *Rulers*, but for directions to the People, that they might be able to judge of the accompliſhment of them: otherwiſe when the *Authority* of the *Jewiſh Church* condemned our *Saviour*, the People could have no reaſon to believe him to be the *Meſſias*; if they were bound in the *ſenſe* of *Scripture* to ſubmit their judgement wholly to the Churches Authority. It is plain then, that the ſenſe of Scripture may be ſo evident to private capacities, that they are not to ſubmit in it to the *preſent Authority of a Church*. For notwithſtanding all the promiſes made to the *Jewiſh Church*, and the command of ſubmitting to the ſentence of their *Prieſts and Rulers*, in a matter of the higeſt concernment, *viz.* concerning the true *Meſſias*, men were bound to believe directly contrary to the preſent Authority in the Church. For the people were bound to believe *Chriſt* to be the *true Meſſias*; although the *High Prieſt and Elders* had condemned him for a *deceiver and malefactor*. But beſides this particular caſe, there may be ſeveral others wherein men may lawfully reject *the Authority of the preſent Church*; and thoſe are, when that Authority ſhall go about to overthrow thoſe things which muſt be ſuppoſed antecedent to the belief of any ſuch Authority: as, 1. The common ſenſe of mankind. 2. The force

of

of a divine Law. 3. The liberty of judgement concerning truth and falſhood. All theſe muſt neceſſarily be ſuppoſed before any Authority of a Church; but if any Church goes about to overthrow theſe, it thereby forfeits its own Authority over men.

1. If it requires things contrary to common ſenſe; as in that inſtance wherein ſome of the *Jewiſh Rabbies* required ſubmiſſion to their Authority, *viz.* in believing the right hand to be the left, or the left to be the right, if they determined ſo; or ſuppoſing the Jews to have required the people to deny that they ever ſaw any Miracle wrought by Chriſt, or in the Miracle of the Loaves, that what they ſaw and handled, and taſted, to be bread was true bread; or to ſay, that the ſame individual body might be in a thouſand places at once, or that things whoſe nature it is to be in another, can ſubſiſt without their proper ſubject; what Church ſoever requires ſuch things as theſe from its members to be believed, gives them juſt reaſon to reject its Authority.

2. If it requires things contrary to the force and reaſon of a divine Law; as the Jews themſelves would have acknowledged, if any Authority among them had gone about either to have left out the ſecond Commandment, or made it lawful to give Religious worſhip to Images, under any diſtinctions whatſoever: or if the Prieſts

had taken away from the people their ſhare in the ſacrifices, under pretence of the *unſanctified teeth*, or the *long beards* of the Laity, which were not fit to touch what had been offered in ſacrifice to God. But we need not put caſes among them, for our Saviour therefore bids men *have a care of*
Mat. 15. 6. 16. 6. *the leaven of the Scribes and Phariſees*, becauſe *by their traditions they made the Commandment of God of none effect*: as in their *Corban*, if they made a vow to God they thought themſelves excuſed from relieving their Parents; and in this way our Saviour generally deals with them, ſhewing that though they pretended to keep the letter of the Law; yet by their corrupt additions and falſe gloſſes they overthrew the ſcope and deſign of it: which he thought ſufficient reaſon to reject their Authority; and therefore when he bids his Diſciples, *ob-*
Mat. 23. 3. *ſerve and do whatſoever the Scribes and Phariſees bid them*; it muſt be ſuppoſed to be only while they keep to the letter and reaſon of the Law; for if he had intended an abſolute obedience, he would never
Mat. 16. 12. elſewhere bid his Diſciples *beware of their Doctrine*.

3. If it takes away all liberty of judgement concerning truth and falſhood in Religion. For this is a natural right which every man hath to judge for himſelf; and they that take this away, may as well command all men to put out their eyes, that they may better follow their Guides. But the other is ſo much worſe, becauſe it is an

aſſault

aſſault upon our underſtandings, it is a robbing us of the greateſt talent God hath committed to our management, it is a rape upon our beſt faculties, and proſtituting them to the luſts of Spiritual Tyrants; it is not *captivating our underſtandings to the obedience of faith*, but enſlaving them to the proud and domineering uſurpations of men; wherein they would do by us as the *Philiſtins* did by *Sampſon*; they would put out our eyes, that we might grind in their priſon, and make them ſport. I would not be miſtaken, it is the liberty of judgement I plead for, and not of practice; that may be juſtly reſtrained by the Laws of the Church, where the other is allowed; becauſe the obligations to peace and unity are different from thoſe to faith and inward aſſent. And that no abſolute ſubmiſſion of judgement could be required by the Law of *Moſes*, notwithſtanding the command of outward obedience in the caſes mention'd, *Deut.* 17. 8, 9, *&c.* is moſt evident from hence, becauſe that Law makes proviſion for a *ſin-offering in caſe the whole Congregation of* Iſrael *ſin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the Aſſembly*, or Supream Council, *and they have done ſomething againſt the commandment of the Lord*: which had been a Law made to no purpoſe, if it had been impoſſible for their chief Authority to have erred or been miſtaken in their judgement. From hence we ſee St. *Paul* had great reaſon to appeal Lev. 4. 13.

from ~~the High~~ *Prieſt and Elders to the Law and the Prophets*, becauſe they were ſubject to error and miſtake, but theſe are not.

2. Becauſe *the Law and the Prophets* are leſs liable to *partiality*, than a living Judge, or the Authority of the preſent Church. I have oft-times wondered to hear men ſpeak ſo advantageouſly of a *living Judge*, before an *Infallible Rule*, in order to the end of Controverſies. If all they mean be only that *an end be put to them* no matter *how*, I confeſs a *living Judge* in that caſe hath much the advantage, but ſo would any other way that perſons would agree upon, as the judgement of the next perſon we met with, or Lottery, or any ſuch thing; but if we would have things fairly examined and heard, and a judgement given according to the merits of the cauſe, the caſe will be found very different here from what it is in civil cauſes. For here the Judge muſt be a party concerned, when his own Authority and intereſt is queſtioned; and liable to all thoſe paſſions which men are ſubject to in their own caſes. Which will be notoriouſly evident in the caſe before us, between the *High Prieſt and Elders* on one ſide, and St. *Paul* on the other: They pleaded, that if any difficulty aroſe about the ſenſe of the Law, it belonged to them to judge of it; St. *Paul* declines their judgement, and appeals only *to the Law and the Prophets*: had it been reaſonable

ſonable in this caſe for *Felix* to have referred the judgement to them who were the parties ſo deeply concerned? A living Judge may have a great advantage over a bare Rule to put an end to Controverſies; but then we muſt ſuppoſe impartiality in him, freedom from prejudice, an excellent judgement, diligence and patience in hearing all the evidence, and at laſt delivering ſentence according to the ſenſe of the Law; if any of theſe be wanting, the Controverſie may ſoon be ended, but on the wrong ſide. I ſuppoſe none of thoſe who would have Controverſies in Religion ended by a living Judge, will for ſhame ſay, they would have them ended right or wrong; but if they would have Truth determined, they muſt give us aſſurance, that theſe Judges ſhall lay aſide all partiality to their own intereſts, all prejudice againſt their Adverſaries, ſhall diligently ſearch, and examine, and weigh the evidence on both ſides, and then ſhall determine according to the true ſenſe of the Law. How likely this is will appear by the living Judges in our Saviours time; Was there ever greater partiality ſeen than was in them, or more obſtinate prejudice, or more willful errors, or a more malicious ſentence than came from them in the cauſe of our Lord and Saviour? They would not believe his Miracles, though told them by thoſe that ſaw them; when they ſaw them,

they

they would not believe they came from God, but attributed them to the Devil; they would not so much as enquire the true place of his Nativity, but ran on still with that wilful mistake, *that he was born in Galilee*; and by this they thought to confound *Nicodemus* presently, *Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet.* If they had searched and looked themselves, they would have found, that Christ was born in *Bethlehem*, and not in *Galilee*. But where men are strongly prejudiced, any thing serves for evidence and demonstration; whereas all the arguments on the other side shall be despised and contemned. How captious were they on all occasions towards our Saviour, lying in wait to entrap him with questions, to pervert his words, and draw blasphemy out of the most innocent expressions? And when none of all these things could do, they use all the waies of fraud, malice and injustice to destroy the Saviour of the world as a Malefactor and Blasphemer. Was not here now a mighty advantage, which the Authority of the present Church among the Jews of that time had, above the guidance of the Law and the Prophets? And the knowledge St. *Paul* had of the same temper being in them still, might justly make him decline their judgement, and appeal only *to the Law and the Prophets*, for the *ground and Rule* of his Faith.

2. *For*

2. *For the object of his worſhip*, he appeals to the *beſt Antiquity*, *I worſhip the God of my Fathers. i. e.* I bring no new Religion among you, but the very ſame in ſubſtance with that which all the Jews have owned; ſo ſome render τῷ πατρῴῳ θεῷ *Deo Patrio*, the God whom all my Brethren acknowledge, but he rather underſtands it of the ſame *God* that was worſhipped *by* Abraham, *and* Iſaac, *and* Jacob, *quem majores noſtri coluerunt*; ſo St. *Peter* in his preaching to the people concerning the reſurrection of Chriſt, to avoid the imputation of Novelty, ſaith, *the God of* Abraham, *and of* Iſaac, *and of* Jacob, *the God of our Fathers hath glorified his Son Jeſus*; and again to the *Sanhedrin* he ſaith, *the God of our Fathers raiſed up Jeſus*; and St. *Paul*, *the God of our Fathers hath choſen thee*; in the uſe of which expreſſions they purpoſely declare that they had no thoughts of bringing in any *new Religion* among them, contrary to what God had of old declared to the Patriarchs. The main things in which the Jews objectd innovation to them, did either concern the bringing in ſome new doctrine, or the reformation of corruptions among them. Act. 3. 13. 5. 30. 22. 14.

1. For their doctrine, that either concerned the *Meſsias*, or a *future ſtate*. For the doctrine of the *Meſſias* it was as antient as the records of any revelation from God were. It was the great promiſe made to the *Patriarchs* long before the Law of *Moſes*; and even *Moſes* himſelf ſpeaks of him,

as St. *Steven* proves to them; and *David*, and *Isaiah*,
Acts 7. 37. and *Jeremiah*, and *Ezekiel*, and *Daniel*, and *Micah*, and *Malachi*, as the Apostles at large prove in their writings. Why should this then be accounted any new doctrine which they all believed and received? If the Question be only whether Christ were that *Messias* or no; for that, they desire nothing more than the testimony of the *Law and the Prophets*, and *the Miracles* wrought by him; but they had no reason to quarrel with them upon their belief, for such an alteration of the state of things which themselves believed must be when the *Messias* came; for in him not only the Nation of the Jews, but *all the Nations of the earth were to be blessed*; which was inconsistent with supposing the Ceremonial Law to continue in its force and obligation; being particularly suited to one people lying within such a compass as *they might* three times a year attend upon the service in the Temple at *Hierusalem*. If their quarrel was, concerning a *future state*, as though that were a new doctrine, St. *Paul* adds in the next Verse, *that themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead both of the just and the unjust*. And in his defence
Acts 26. 6, 7. before *Agrippa* he saith, *And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our Fathers, unto which promise our twelve Tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to to come*. So that the Apostle produces *Antiquity*, *Universality* and *Consent* in these Fundamental

Fundamental Articles of the Christian Religion; only a late busie and Politck Faction of the *Sadduces* opposed this doctrine; but why should their opposition signifie any thing against so full a a stream running down from the first and purest Antiquity? Thus much for the positive part of their faith and doctrine.

2. For the negative part, or *the reformation of abuses and corruptions* among them; this was St. *Pauls* plea; Let them shew where *the God of our Fathers* imposed any of those heavy burdens which the Scribes and Pharisees place so much of their Religion in. What ground is there *in the Law and the Prophets*, for the Pharisaical Superstitions, and Vows, and severities to themselves in fetching blood and knocking their heads against the walls, and different garbs and dresses to appear more holy unto men, with many other customs of theirs, the observation of which was made so great a part of the Religion of their devoutest men? And it is a strange thing they should think it impossible such things should come in among them, without great notice being taken of it; for although sudden and violent changes may have all the circumstances known, yet it is not to be expected in more insensible and gradual alterations. A man may tell when a violent Feaver seized upon him and inflamed his blood, but he cannot do so by a Hectick or a Consumption;

must he therefore believe himself well, because he cannot tell the punctual time when he fell sick? We may easily describe the circumstances of a Landflood which overflows the banks, and bears all before it, but we cannot do so by the coming in of the Tide, which steals in secretly and insensibly, and no man can assign the place where the salt and fresh water first mix together. Superstition is a Hectick Feaver to Religion, it by degrees consumes the vitals of it, but comes on insensibly, and is not easily discovered till it be hard to be cured. At first, it may be some devout but indiscreet men made way for it, who love to find out some Modes of devotion different from the rest of the world, which are greedily imbraced by such who admire and follow them; this example taking, another begins and sets up for a more refined way than the former; and so the design spreads, till at last true piety and goodness be swallowed up by superstitious fopperies. Which is the most probable account of all the Pharisaical corruptions; some of whose observations might be begun at first with a good mind, and by the devout persons of that time; but afterwards, every one that had a sowrer look and a worse nature than ordinary, thought it not enough to follow the example of others, but like a great *Physitian* he must have his *Nostrum's*, something of his own finding out, a new garb, or ceremony,

remony, or poſture of devotion, whereby he may be taken notice of, and admired for his ſanctity. Thus that fardle of ſuperſtitious rites was gathered up among the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* in our *Saviours* time, whom he moſt ſeverely upon all occaſions rebukes for their hypocriſie, in placing ſo much of their Religion in them. And thus much for the way taken by St. *Paul* to vindicate Chriſtianity from the imputations of being a *new Sect* or *Hereſie*, by an appeal to *Scripture* and the *beſt Antiquity*.

3. There remains only, the *freedom and courage* expreſſed by him in owning his Religion, notwithſtanding theſe falſe imputations. *But this I confeſs unto thee, that after the way which is called hereſie, &c.* He abhorred that mean and baſe-ſpirited principle, which makes it lawful for men to deny their Religion when it brings them into danger; he ſtudied no ſecret arts of complyance with his Adverſaries to ſecure himſelf; he did not decline appearing, though to the hazard of his life in ſo juſt a cauſe. He valued his Religion beyond his own ſafety, and regarded not all the calumnies and reproaches of his enemies, as long as he made this his conſtant *exerciſe, to keep a conſcience void of offence, both towards God and towards men.* And this he elſewhere ſaith, afforded him more inward comfort and ſatisfaction, than all the crafts and policy in the world could give him. *For our rejoycing* Ver 16.

joycing is this, ſaith he, *the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God we have had our converſation in the world.* There is nothing inſpires men with ſo much courage, as integrity and uprightneſs of mind doth; and ſuch perſons who have the comfort of that, have not only better hopes as to another world, but oft-times eſcape better as to this, than others do, for even their enemies cannot but eſteem them: whereas the fawning, ſneaking and flattering hypocrite that will do or be any thing for his own advantage, is deſpiſed by thoſe he courts, hated by good men, and at laſt tormented by his own conſcience, for being falſe to God and Religion. But we may ſee here in St. *Paul* a great inſtance of true *Chriſtian magnanimity*; he was ſenſible how great both the malice and quality of his enemies were; he knew he was to anſwer before a Judge, that regarded nothing either of Juſtice or Religion; yet he neither flatters his Judge, nor betrayes any diſtruſt of him: he doth not beſpatter his enemies, nor diſcover any fear of them; but with a modeſt freedom and manly courage owns the main part of their accuſation, and effectually vindicates his own innocency and his Religion together. For even *Felix* himſelf, although a man otherwiſe very capable of being wrought upon by ſome wayes of addreſs, of which we read,

Ver. 26.

Ver. 26. yet the *High Prieſt* and the *Elders* with their eloquent *Tertullus* were forced to return as they came, and leave St. *Paul* under the name of a *Priſoner*, but enjoying the conveniencies of *liberty*, *ver.* 23.

I have now gone through all the parts of the Text, with a reſpect to St. *Paul* and the *Authority* of the *Jewiſh Church*, which was ingaged againſt him; it may now be juſtly expected that I make *Application* of what I have ſaid to our own *State* and *Condition*. Thanks be to God we are not brought to ſuch a tryal as St. *Paul* was, we enjoy the liberty of ſpeaking for ourſelves and our Religion, and not only ſpeaking for it, but profeſſing and owning it. And may we ever do ſo! But we have buſie and reſtleſs Adverſaries abroad, the factors of the *High Prieſt* and *Elders* at *Rome*, who have as much ſpight and malice againſt us, as ever thoſe of *Hieruſalem* had againſt St. *Paul*; and they have their *Tertullus's* too, men of art and inſinuation, and who manage their cauſe againſt us juſt as he did againſt St. *Paul*, they charge us with bringing in *new Sects* under the pretence of *Reformation*; or with rejecting the Authority of the preſent Church which we were bound to obey, and thereby laying the Foundation of *Faction* and *Schiſm*. Theſe are heavy charges, but they are no other than thoſe the *High Prieſt and the Elders* made againſt St. *Paul*;

and

and thanks be to God, his *Defence* and *Vindication* is *ours* too, for we appeal *to Scripture* and the *beſt* and *pureſt Antiquity*; and deſire to be judged according to theſe. Theſe three things therefore I ſhall ſpeak to, before I conclude.

1. That the ſame reaſons which they produce againſt the *Reformation* would have held againſt the ſpreading of Chriſtianity at firſt.

2. That the ſame *Defence* which St *Paul* made for Chriſtianity will juſtifie the *Reformation*.

3. That we have all reaſon to follow the courage of St. *Paul* in owning and defending our Religion, notwithſtandiug the imputations which are caſt upon it.

1. That the ſame reaſons which they produce againſt the *Reformation* would have held againſt *Chriſtianity* at firſt. What have all the clamours of our adverſaries for above a hundred years come to, but the very ſame which I have already mentioned as the Jews Objections againſt Chriſtianity, *viz.* *Novelty*, and *Faction*? "Where "was your Church before the Reformation? "produce your ſucceſſion in all Ages, of perſons "who agreed in all things with you. Where "were thoſe diſtinct bodies of men who found "fault with thoſe corruptions that you pre-"tend to reform? Our Church hath had a con-"ſtant and glorious ſucceſſion of Biſhops, and "Martyrs, and Confeſſors, and Religious Orders

of

" of Men, Virgins and Widdows. But ſuppoſing " ſuch a diſtinct ſucceſſion were not neceſſary, " yet ſhew how it was poſſible for ſo many er- " rors and corruptions to come into the Church, " and no one take notice of them and diſcover " them. Where was the watchfull eye of Provi- " dence over the Church all this while? What, " all the Paſtors aſleep at once! or all conſpi- " ring together to deceive their poſterity! Be- " ſides, how can the Proteſtants ever anſwer " their rejecting the Authority of the preſent " Church which they lived under? and to whom " God had promiſed his infallible Spirit? how " can they clear themſelves from faction and " diſturbing the peace of the Chriſtian world, " which lived in ſo great unity and peace before? This is the ſumm of their Objections againſt the *Reformation*, which are the very ſame we have mention'd before, as produced by the Jews againſt Chriſtianity. If the arguments are good now, they were ſo then; if they were good then, for all that I can ſee the *High Prieſt* and *Elders* were in the right, and St. *Paul* in the wrong; if they were not good then, but are now, ſome remarkable diſparity muſt be ſhewed between their caſe and ours, and that muſt lye in ſhewing theſe three things.

1. That the Chriſtian Church hath greater infallibility promiſed than the Jewiſh had.

2. That the first Christians had greater reason to reject the Authority of that Church, than the Reformers had, as to the Church of *Rome*.

3. That the causes of corruptions in the *Jewish Church*, could not hold in the Christian. But if none of these can be made good, then the case will appear to be the very same.

1. It cannot be proved that the *Christian Church* hath greater infallibility promised than the *Jewish* had. Of which we have this plain evidence, that one of the strongest arguments produced for the infallibility of the *Christian Church* is taken from the promises made to the *Jewish*. How often hath *Deut.* 17. 8, 9, 10. been made Use of to prove infallibility in the *Christian* Church? If they had any better arguments in the New Testament, would they ever run so far back to a command that most evidently relates to the Jewish constitution? Where hath ever God promised that he would dwell in St. *Peters* at *Rome*, as he did, that he would dwell in his Temple at *Hierusalem*? What boastings and triumphs would there have been, if any such words had been in the *Gospel* concerning *Rome*, as there were of old concerning *Hierusalem*; viz. *that God had sanctified it, that his name might be there for ever; and his eyes and his heart should be there perpetually*? What pittiful proofs in comparison of this, are all those brought out of the New Testament for

2 Cron. 7. 16.

the

the Authority and infallibillity of the *Roman* Church? What are all the promiſes of the Spirit made to the Apoſtles, and remarkably accompliſhed in them, to this plain promiſe of Gods Particular preſence in that place for ever? Suppoſe St. *Peter* had priviledges above the reſt of the *Apoſtles*, how comes the entail to be made to all his ſucceſſors, and only at *Rome* and no where elſe? Where are the Deeds kept, that contain this gift? Why are they not produced during all this conteſt? And yet we ſee in the *Jewiſh Church* where ſuch a promiſe was made to a particular place, no ſuch thing as infallibility was implyed in it.

2. It cannot be ſhewed, that the firſt *Chriſtians* had greater reaſon to reject the Authority of the Jewiſh Church, than our *Reformers* had to reject that of the *Church* of *Rome*. I know here it will be preſenly ſaid, *That the Apoſtles ſaw the Miracles of Chriſt, and wrought many themſelves, and received an immediate Commiſſion from Jeſus Chriſt in whom the Churches Infallibility was then ſeated.* All which I grant to be true in it ſelf, but cannot be pleaded by them who contend for abſolute obedience to the preſent Churches Authority as infallible. My reaſon is, becauſe upon this principle they could not believe Chriſt to be the true *Meſsias*; for his being the true *Meſsias* depended upon two things, *viz. the fullfilling of*

Prophecies, and *the truth of his Miracles*; now according to their principles, no man could be certain of either of these without the Authority of the Church; for the fullfilling of Prophecies depended upon the sense of many obscure places of Scripture, about which they say there is a necessity of an infallible Judge; and for Miracles, they tell us, that there is no certain way of judging true and false, but by the Authority of the Church. Now if these things be so, what ground could the first Christians have to believe Christ to be the true *Messias*, when in both these, they must oppose the Authority of the present Church?

3. They can never prove, that the same causes of corruptions do not hold as to the Christian, which did as to the Jewish Church. For the *Christian Church* in those Ages which we charge with introducing the corruptions, was degenerated into greater *Ignorance*, *Barbarism*, *Luxury*, and *Superstition*, than the *Jewish Church* in the time of its darkness from the cessation of *Prophecy* till the coming of Christ. Our Adversaries themselves confess, that for a long time, there was nothing either of Learning or Humanity among them; nothing but ease, and luxury, and ambition, and all manner of Wickedness, among the Chief Rulers among them; nay even at *Rome* there was a succession of fifty of their *High Priests*,

so

ſo remarkable for their wickedneſs, that *Annas* and *Caiphas* (ſetting only aſide their condemning Chriſt) were *Saints* in compariſon of them. And is it now any wonder that ſuch errors and corruptions ſhould come into that Church, as thoſe we charge them with? Nay, rather the greateſt wonder ſeems to be, that any thing of Chriſtianity ſhould be preſerved among them. But beſies the *ſottiſhneſs* of thoſe times, we have many other cauſes to aſſign of the corruptions introduced among them; as, a *Complyance with Gentiliſm* in many of their Cuſtoms and Superſtitions; *Affectation of new Modes of Devotion*, among indiſcreet *Zealots*; *Ambition* and conſtant endeavour to advance the Authority and Intereſts of the Prieſthood above all Secular Power; and when for a long time theſe had been gathering the rude materials together, then the *Mooriſh Philoſophy* happening to creep in among them, the *Monks* began to buſie themſelves therein, and by the help of that, a little better to digeſt that Maſs and heap of corruptions, and to ſpend the wit they had to defend and improve them.

2. But againſt all theſe, we ſtand upon the ſame defence that St. *Paul* did: we appeal to *Scripture*, and the *beſt and pureſt Antiquity*. We pretend to bring in no new Doctrines, and therefore no *Miracles* can be required of us; which

which the *Apoſtles* wrought to confirm Chriſts being the true *Meſsias* who was to alter that *State* which God himſelf had once appointed: All that we plead for, is that the Religion eſtabliſhed by Chriſt may ſerve our turn, and that which is recorded by the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts; to theſe we make our conſtant appeal, and have the ſame reaſon to decline the Authority of the *Roman* Church, that St. *Paul* had as to the *High Prieſt* and *Elders*, when he appealed to *the Law and the Prophets*: Nay, we have ſomewhat more reaſon; becauſe God had once appointed the *High Prieſts* and *Rulers* of the *people* among them, but the Supremacy of the *Roman Church* was a meer Uſurpation begun by Ambition, advanced by Forgery, and defended by Cruelty. But we do not only *believe all that is written in the Law and the Prophets*; but *we worſhip the God of our Fathers*; of *the Fathers of the firſt and pureſt Ages of the Chriſtian Church*; we are not only content to make uſe of their *Authority* in theſe matters, but we make our appeal to them; and have begged our Adverſaries ever ſince the *Reformation*, to prove the points in difference between us, by the teſtimony of the firſt ſix hundred years; but from that time to this, they are as far from proving any one point, as ever they were.

3. What

3. What then follows from all this, but that we ſhould imitate St. *Pauls* courage in owning and defending our Religion, notwithſtanding all the falſe imputations which are caſt upon it? What a ſhame would it be for us, meanly and baſely to betray that Cauſe, for which our Anceſtors ſacrificed their lives? Is the *Romiſh Religion* any thing better than it was then? What error in Doctrine, or corruption in Practice have they ever reformed? Nay, have they not rather eſtabliſhed and confirmed them more? Are they any thing kinder to us than they have been? No. Notwithſtanding all their late pleadings for *Evangelical Peace and Charity*, they can at the ſame time tell us, *That the Statutes againſt Hereticks are ſtill in force againſt us, as condemned Hereticks*; and we are not ſo dull, not to apprehend the meaning of that; *viz.* that were it in their power they could lawfully burn us to morrow. And is not this the height of *Evangelical Love and Sweetneſs*? Who can but admire the perſwaſiveneſs of ſuch arguments to *Goſpel-meekneſs*, and melt at the tenderneſs and bowels of an *Inquiſition*? Let us not deceive our ſelves; it is not the mean complyance of any in going half way towards them, will ſerve their turn: there is no chewing their Pills, all muſt be ſwallowed together, or as good in their opinion to have none at all. For not only

Advocat. of Conſcience-Liberty, p. 236. 247.

ly plain *Hereticks*, but the *favourers* and *ſuſpected of Hereſie* are ſolemnly excommunicated every yeat in the famous *Bull* of *Cœna Domini*; and *Lindwood* their *Engliſh Canoniſt*, tells us whom they account ſuſpected of Hereſie, viz. *All that ſhew common civility to Hereticks, or give Alms to them, or that once hear their Sermons.* This laſt indeed hath been mitigated by a conſiderable party among them; for notwithſtanding the oppoſition of the *Jeſuits* in this matter, and ſeven *Briev's* obtained by their means from ſeveral *Popes* forbidding all *Roman*-Catholicks to come to our Churches; yet the Secular Prieſts have contended for it as a thing lawful for them not only to come to our Prayers, and hear our Sermons, but to partake of our Sacraments too. Which they may allow, while they hope to carry on their intereſt better that way; but if once, (which God forbid) the Tide ſhould turn with them, then the old Laws of their Church muſt prevail, and nothing will be thought ſo wholſome as an Inquiſition. Which it is ſtrange, their Advocates for Liberty of Conſcience, ſhould call only, *Laws in Catholick Countries againſt Hereticks*, *and not Laws of the Church*, when there are extant above a hundred *Bulls* and *Briev's* of *Popes* eſtabliſhing, confirming, and enlarging the *Inquiſition.* Since then no favour is to be expected from their Church (for

Lindwood Provinc. l. 5. tit. de haret. p. 162. 2.

Vertum. Rom. p. 104, 105.

Advoc. for Lib. p. 24.

V. Append. ad Nicol. Eyneric. Director. Inquiſit. Vep. 1607.

(for whatever they pretend, all the ſeverity comes from thence, all the favour and mitigation from the Clemency and Wiſdom of Princes) let us endeavour to ſtrengthen our ſelves, by a hearty zeal for our Religion, and uſing the beſt means to confirm and uphold it. And ſince *the Children of this world are in their Generation wiſer than the Children of light*; there are ſome things practiſed among them which may deſerve our imitation: and thoſe are,

1. A mighty Induſtry and Zeal in promoting their Cauſe; they have learn'd of their Predeceſſors to *compaſs Sea and Land to gain one Proſelyte.* They inſinuate themſelves into all companies, ſtick at no pains, accommodate themſelves to all humours, and are provided one way or other to gratifie perſons of all inclinations; for they have retirement for the melancholy, buſineſs for the active, idleneſs for the lazy, honour for the ambitious, ſplendor for the vain, ſeverities for the ſowre and hardy, and a good doſe of pleaſures for the ſoft and voluptuous. It is not their *Way*, but their *Zeal* and *Induſtry* I propound to our imitation; I know not how it comes to paſs; but ſo it often happens, that they who are moſt ſecure of truth on their ſide, are moſt apt to be remiſs and careleſs; and to comfort themſelves with ſome good old ſayings, as *God will provide*, and *Truth will prevail*,

though they lye ſtill, and do nothing towards it; but certainly ſuch negligence is inexcuſable, where the matter is of ſo great importance, the Adverſaries ſo many, and an account muſt be given ſhortly in another world, of what men have done or ſuffered for their Religion in this.

2. Submiſſion and Obedience to their Spiritual Governours; the greateſt ſtrength of that prevailing Faction lyes in the cloſe union and coheſion of all the parts together, by a ſetled ſubordination of one to another; which though not always effectual, yet the contrivance is ſo laid, as if there were as much Truth and Reaſon as, Policy in it, cannot be denyed to be fit for upholding the intereſt of a Church. But we plead not for their blind and abſolute obedience; but ſure the Apoſtles had ſome meaning when they bid the Chriſtians *obey them that had the rule over them, and ſubmit themſelves, for they watched for their ſouls; and eſteem them very highly in love for their Works ſake:* not, be ready on all occaſions to reproach and contemn them, and be glad of any idle ſtories wherewith to beſpatter them. If men would once underſtand and practiſe the duties of humility, modeſty, and ſubmiſſion to the Government which God hath ſet over us, we might have greater hopes to ſecure the intereſt of our Church

Heb. 13. 17. 2 Theſſ. 5. 13.

Church and Religion, than without it we can ever have. For ſpiritual pride, conceitedneſs in Religion, and a Spirit of contradiction to Superiours are to be reckoned among ſome of the worſt Symptoms of a declining Church.

3. Leſſening of differences among themſelves; for although with all their care they cannot prevent them, yet they ſtill endeavour to extenuate them, as much as poſſible, and boaſt of their Unity among ſtrangers to their Churches affairs. The great wiſdom of the *Court* of *Rome* lyes in this, that as long as perſons are true to them in the main points wherein the difference lyes, they can let them alone in ſmaller differences among themſelves; and not provoke either of the diſſenting parties, unleſs they are ſure to ſuppreſs them, leſt they give them occaſion to withdraw from their communion. They can allow different Rites and Ceremonies in the ſeveral Orders of Religion among them, and grant exemptions and priviledges in particular caſes; as long as they make them ſerviceable to their common intereſt by upholding and ſtrengthning them. Would to God we could at laſt learn this Wiſdom from our enemies, not to widen our own differences by inveterate heats, bitterneſs and animoſities amoug our ſelves; but to find out wayes whereby even the diſſenters in ſmaller things may be

made useful for the maintaining the common interest of our Church and Religion. And it is a vain thing in any to go about to separate these; or ever to hope that the *Protestant Religion* can be preserved among us without upholding *the Church of England*. For if once that *Bullwark* be demolished, our Adversaries will despise all the lesser *Sconces* and *Pallisado's*; they will be but like *Romulus* his *Walls*, which they will easily leap over at their pleasure. I pray God then (and I hope you will all joyn with me in it) that he would vouchsafe to our Governours the Spirit of Wisdom and Peace, to find out the most proper means for the establishment of our Church and Religion; and I pray God give us all a Spirit of knowledge *to understand the things which belong to our peace*, and of Love and Unity to endeavour after them.

FINIS.